

United States Department of Agriculture



Natural Resources Conservation Service  
655 Parfet Street, Room E200C  
Lakewood, Colorado 80215

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VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

**COLORADO BULLETIN NO.:** CO-360-06-08

Date: July 25, 2006

**SUBJECT:** PER – Performance Awards

**TO:** All Employees

**PURPOSE:** To provide Fiscal Year guidance and information

**EXPIRATION DATE:** September 30, 2006

**ACTION REQUIRED BY:** September 1, 2006

This year we will obligate the end-of-year awards prior to year-end closing. Due to expected budget restrictions for FY2007, it is important to have awards submitted to Human Resources no later than September 1, 2006. There will be no extensions and any request for awards received after this date will not be processed. If you are planning to award Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) gifts (jackets, key chains, etc) they must also be obligated prior to September 1, 2006. The actual award presentation can be scheduled anytime (i.e. December). The completed form, AD-287-2 is considered an obligation. The following guidance is provided to assist with nomination of performance/incentive awards for Fiscal Year 2007 as they relate to year-end closing of performance evaluations covering the period of October 1, 2005 through September 30, 2006.

Area Conservationists (AC) and Principal Staff (PS) have been delegated authority to approve awards for their respective staff members. The amount approved for each AC and PS for awards will be disseminated under a separate e-mail.

Approval of all awards and recognition must be coordinated through first-line supervisors and the appropriate AC or PS member. Nominations by employees for co-workers must be submitted through the nominee's supervisor who will serve as the reviewing official.

Guidelines governing the overall incentive awards program may be found in USDA's document "Guide for Employee Recognition", Form AD-1097 (12/94). Copies of this guide may be obtained by accessing the following website: <http://www.usda.gov/da/employ/recog.htm>.

All award nominations must be submitted on U.S. Department of Agriculture, Approval of Awards, Form AD-287 (7-94). A written justification must be provided for any monetary extra effort recognition exceeding \$500 or time-off award exceeding 10 hours. All justifications

should be attached to Form AD-287-2 at the time of submission. Refer to Appendix C in the Guide for Employee Recognition for recommended documentation pertaining to written justifications.

Recognition of noteworthy efforts and accomplishments involving participation in Civil Rights and Equal Opportunity activities is greatly encouraged as well as accomplishments by groups of individuals or teams.

The AD-287-2 form is divided into the following two categories for recognition of awards:

- Extra Effort Award
- Performance Bonus Award

The Extra Effort Award is further defined by two categories:

- Non-monetary Extra Effort Awards
- Monetary Extra Effort Awards

These types of awards are generally given for a specific or particular accomplishment that is non-recurring in nature for an assignment, project or achievement and is not necessarily required of the employee's performance. An award of this nature can be given to the individual any time throughout the year to ensure timely recognition.

#### **Monetary Extra Effort Awards**

- Extra Effort Awards - (not to exceed \$500)
- Spot Award – (not to exceed \$500)
- Employee Invention or Suggestion – value dependent upon measurable contribution to the agency

**Note: The dollar amounts annotated are to ensure consistency of awards disseminated throughout various offices for the State of Colorado.**

#### **Non-Monetary Extra Effort Awards**

- Time-off Awards – Employees are eligible to receive up to 10 hours of time off; however, supervisors **may only approve up to 8 hours for individual time off awards with concurrence of the appropriate AC or PS member.** Recommendations for more than 8 hours must be submitted to the State Conservationist for approval. The Human Resources staff must be notified as soon as possible when this type of award has been approved.
- Keepsakes, certificates, plaques, etc. – Keepsakes include items presented as honorary awards, which include the Agency or Department logo and are suitable for display. Gift certificates may not exceed \$100 and may only be exchanged for merchandise or services (not cash) from retail locations, restaurants, mail order businesses, etc. **NRCS employees are not eligible for gift certificates.**

- Non-NRCS Employees – You are encouraged to recognize private citizens (volunteers, Soil Conservationist District Employees, partners, etc.) for their efforts in support of the NRCS mission. They may receive non-monetary recognition such as thank-you notes, Certificates of Appreciation, plaques and keepsakes (with the NRCS Logo).

The Performance Bonus Award category is appropriate for recognition of a high level of performance (productivity or quality work) on a consistent basis over the course of the rating cycle. This category is defined in two categories:

- Lump Sum Performance Bonuses - \$1000
- Quality Step Increases (QSIs). A QSI is an additional with-in grade increase granted. An employee may only be granted one QSI within the last 52 weeks. **A QSI is not appropriate when the employee: Is in the 10<sup>th</sup> step of the general schedule; has announced retirement (and would only benefit for a limited period); and is not expected to remain in the same position or similar position at the same grade for a period long enough to benefit from the award (i.e., a career ladder position when promotion is upcoming.** Nominations for quality step increases require additional documentation which describes the following:
  - Actual results achieved and their linkage to established targets;
  - How the employee substantially exceeded performance standards and expected work results;
  - How the performance has been sustained at a high level throughout the appraisal period

All nominations for incentive awards must be submitted on Form AD-287-2 through the appropriate channel of approval and **received in Human Resources by close of business on September 1, 2006.**

Please contact Human Resources if you have any questions.

/s/ Randy Randall *for*

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State Conservationist

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